IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims and add new claims 20 and 21 as follows:

1. (currently amended) A tube of synthetic silica glass for producing a preform, **said tube comprising a cylinder body of silica glass** which has an inner bore **and** [~~with a~~] **an inner peripheral** surface [~~layer~~] **facing said inner bore** produced without tool-contact in **a** [~~the~~] molten state, an outer cylinder wall, and an inner region extending between **said** inner bore and **said** outer cylinder wall, **wherein** [~~characterized in that the~~] **a** surface **region having** [~~layer (30) has~~] a thickness of 10 µm **extending from the inner peripheral surface has** [~~and~~] a mean OH content of not more than 5 wtppm and **the inner peripheral surface has** an average surface roughness R_a of not more than 0.1 µm [~~therein~~], and [~~that~~] the inner region **extending from the inner bore** [~~(34) which starts on the surface layer (30)~~] and [~~terminates~~] **terminating** 10 µm before the outer cylinder wall**, said inner region having** [~~has~~] a mean OH content of not more than 0.2 wtppm.

2. (currently amended) The silica glass tube according to claim 1, **wherein** [~~characterized in that~~] the mean OH content in the surface **region** [~~layer (30)~~] is not more than 1 wtppm.

3. (currently amended) The silica glass tube according to claim 1 [~~or 2~~], **wherein** [~~characterized in that~~] the mean OH content in the inner region [~~(34)~~] is not more than 0.1 wtppm.

4. (currently amended) The silica glass tube according to **claim 1** [~~any one of the preceding claims~~], **wherein** [~~characterized in that~~] the synthetic silica glass is doped with a dopant [~~in the form~~] **selected from the group consisting** of fluorine, GeO_2, B_2O_3, P_2O_5, Al_2O_3, **and** TiO_2, or **with** a combination of **two or more of** said dopants **of said group**.

5. (currently amended) A method for producing a tube of synthetic silica glass in a vertical drawing method**, said method comprising:**

supplying [~~in that~~] a silica glass mass [~~is~~] continuously [~~supplied~~] to a heating zone and [~~softened~~] **softening the silica glass mass** therein**,** and

drawing a tube strand [~~is~~] continuously [~~drawn~~] off from [~~the~~] **a** softened region **of said silica glass mass,**

said tube strand having an inner bore therein, [~~and~~] a scavenging gas **being** [~~is~~] circulated through the inner bore of said tube **strand,** and

obtaining a silica glass tube [~~is obtained therefrom~~] by cutting **said tube strand** to length,

wherein [~~characterized in that a~~] **the** scavenging gas [~~(23) having~~] **has** a water content of less than 100 wtppb [~~is used~~], and **wherein** [~~that the~~] **a** front end of the tube strand [~~(19)~~] is closed by a flow obstacle [~~(26)~~] which is permeable to the scavenging **gas** [~~glass~~] and which reduces **flow** [~~the amount~~] of the scavenging gas [~~(23)~~] flowing therethrough.

6. (currently amended) The method according to claim 5, **wherein** [~~characterized in that~~] [~~a~~] **the** scavenging gas **has** [~~(23) is used having~~] a water content of less than 30 wtppb.

7. (currently amended) The method according to claim 5 [~~or 6~~], **wherein** [~~characterized in that~~] the flow obstacle [~~(26)~~] is formed by a plug which projects into the inner bore of the tube strand and which narrows [~~the~~] **a** cross-section **of flow** of the [~~freely flowing~~] scavenging gas [~~(23)~~].

8. (currently amended) The method according to claim 6 [~~or 7~~], **wherein** [~~characterized in that~~] the flow obstacle is produced by a gas curtain acting on the front end of the tube strand.

9. (currently amended) The method according to **claim 5** [~~any one of the preceding method claims~~], **wherein** [~~characterized in that~~] the silica glass mass is provided in the form of a hollow cylinder [~~(2)~~] which, starting with [~~its~~] **a** front end **thereof**, is continuously fed to the heating zone [~~(1)~~] and softened therein in portions, and the tube strand [~~(21)~~] is continuously drawn off from the softened region, the hollow cylinder [~~(2)~~] being elongated to at least 5 times its initial length.

10. (currently amended) The method according to claim 9, **wherein** [~~characterized in that~~] the hollow cylinder [~~(2)~~] is elongated to at least 20 times its initial length.

11. (currently amended) The method according to **claim 5** [~~**any one of the preceding method claims**~~], **wherein** [~~**characterized in that**~~] the scavenging gas [~~(23)~~] contains a gaseous drying agent [~~**, particularly a chlorine-containing gas**~~].

12. (currently amended) The method according to **claim 5** [~~**any one of the preceding method claims**~~], **wherein** [~~**characterized in that**~~] the scavenging gas [~~(23)~~] is subjected to a drying process before being introduced into the inner bore [~~(4)~~] of the tube strand.

13. (currently amended) The method according to **claim 5** [~~**any one of the preceding method claims**~~], **wherein** [~~**characterized in that**~~] the volume flow of the scavenging gas [~~(23)~~] through the inner bore [~~(4)~~] is not more than 80 l/min.

14. (currently amended) The method according to **claim 5** [~~**any one of the preceding method claims**~~], **wherein** [~~**characterized in that**~~] an external scavenging gas [~~(24)~~] flows around the outer cladding of the tube strand [~~(21)~~] in the region of the heating zone [~~(1)~~], **the external scavenging gas having a water content,** the water content of the scavenging gas [~~(23)~~] being lower by at least [~~**the**~~] **a** factor **of** 10 than [~~**that**~~] **the water content** of the external scavenging gas [~~(24)~~].

15. (currently amended) The method according to **claim 6** [~~**any one of claims 6 to 13**~~], **wherein** [~~**characterized in that**~~] an external scavenging gas [~~(24)~~] flows around the outer cladding of the tube strand [~~(21)~~] in the region of the heating zone [~~(1)~~], the **same gas being**

used as both the scavenging gas [~~**(23) being used**~~] **and** as the external scavenging gas [~~**(24)**~~].

16. (currently amended) The method according to **claim 14** [~~**any one of claims 14 or 15**~~], **wherein** [~~**characterized in that**~~] the external scavenging gas [~~**(24)**~~] flows around the outer cladding of the tube strand [~~**(21)**~~] at least for **a duration of time** such [~~**a long time**~~] that said strand is cooled down to a temperature below 900°C.

17. (currently amended) The method according to **claim 5** [~~**any one of the preceding method claims**~~], **wherein** [~~**characterized in that**~~] the silica glass tube is subjected to an OH reduction treatment at a temperature of at least 900°C in a water-free atmosphere or in vacuum.

18. (currently amended) The method according to claim 17, **wherein** [~~**characterized in that**~~] the OH reduction treatment includes a treatment in **a** deuterium-containing atmosphere.

19. (currently amended) **A method of forming a tubular glass member, said method comprising: [**~~**Use of the**~~] **forming a** silica glass tube according to **claim 1** [~~**any one of claims 1 to 4 or of the silica glass tube produced according to the method according to any one of claims 5 to 18**~~], **and depositing** [~~**as a substrate tube for internal deposition of**~~] SiO_2 layers [~~**in an**~~] **on the inner peripheral facing said inner bore using** MCVD [~~**method**~~] **with said silica glass tube being used as a substrate tube for said MCVD**.

20. (new) The method according to claim 5, wherein the scavenging gas contains a gaseous drying agent comprising a chlorine-containing gas.

21. (new) A method of forming a tubular glass member, said method comprising: forming a silica glass tube according to the method of claim 5; and depositing SiO_2 layers on the silica glass tube in the inner bore using MCVD with said silica glass tube being used as a substrate tube for said MCVD.